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AUTHOR Hornberger, Nancy H.; Hardman, Joel
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ABSTRACT

Two programs in which biliteracy is being actively developed among immigrant groups are examined within the framework of nine continua of biliteracy. One program is an adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) class for Cambodian refugee women, taught by a young Cambodian woman. It is assumed that the teacher and students, as members of an urban Cambodian refugee community, share norms of behavior, language use, and education. The second program served Puerto Rican adolescents in parallel Spanish- and English-medium Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes. The nine continua on which the program analyses are based include: (1) first-to-second-language transfer; (2) reception/production; (3) oral/written language; (4) similar/dissimilar linguistic constructions; (5) convergent/divergent scripts; (6) simultaneous/successive exposure; (7) micro/macro setting; (8) oral/literate; and (9) monolingual/bilingual. It is concluded that in the Cambodian ESL class, a cognitive-skills approach to literacy coexists comfortably with a cultural-practice approach characterized by student-initiated, teacher-supported social learning strategies. The Puerto Rican GED program approaches literacy as a cognitive skill embedded as cultural practice. A brief bibliography is included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Literacy as Cultural Practice and Cognitive Skill: Biliteracy in a Cambodian Adult ESL Class and a Puerto Rican GED Program

by
Nancy H. Hornberger
Joel Hardman
Graduate School of Education
University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract

Hornberger's nine continua of biliteracy (1989) will be used as a framework for examining two specific situations of biliteracy and biliterate development. By doing so it will hopefully be possible to resolve perceived conflicts between cognitive and cultural (or Street's autonomous and ideological) approaches to literacy. These approaches should not be viewed as opposing beliefs of what literacy *is*, but different ways of looking *at* literacy. To understand any particular instance of (bi)literacy from the participants' point of view, both perspectives need to be understood by the observer.

The two concrete situations of biliteracy and biliterate development examined here are part of a larger long-term comparative ethnographic study on biliteracy in two communities of Philadelphia. The first is an adult ESL (English as a Second Language) class for recent Cambodian refugees (all women) taught by a young Cambodian woman. It is the assumption of this paper that the teacher and students in this class, as members of an urban Cambodian refugee community, share norms of behavior and language use, and also share attitudes toward learning and what it means to know a language. Therefore, their work together reflects a culture of literacy. When their class is read using the continua of biliteracy, it will be shown that a cognitive-skills approach to literacy, emphasizing mechanical encoding and decoding skills, co-exists comfortably with a cultural-practice approach characterized by student-initiated, teacher-supported, social learning strategies.

The second specific biliteracy situation is ASPIRA's *Abriendo Caminos* 'Creating Opportunities' program, serving approximately 60-80 Puerto Rican adolescents, ages 16-21, per year, in parallel Spanish-medium and English-medium GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) classes. The program includes not only GED instruction, but also cultural and self-awareness training, and work orientation and experience. An examination of this program using the continua of biliteracy reveals how the program approaches literacy as cognitive skill while at the same time embedding it as cultural practice.

While the autonomous model of literacy arises from a peculiarly monocultural notion of a single, standardized, schooled literacy (cf. Cook-Gumperz 1986), the ideological model reflects a pluralistic view. It is hardly surprising, then, that it is in examining these situations of <u>bi</u>literacy, where participants are daily involved in negotiating the co-existence of languages and cultures, that we find evidence of the co-existence of the models, specifically that the autonomous model is circumscribed by the ideological model.

Literacy as Cultural Practice and Cognitive Skill: Biliteracy in a Cambodian Adult ESL Class and a Puerto Rican GED Program

Literacy is often regarded as a neutral and technical tool, identified in terms of discrete elements of reading and writing skills, and seen as autonomous and independent of context. Under this view, literacy, once acquired, brings not only positive cognitive, social and economic consequences to the literate individual, but also social and economic development to the literate society (cf. Wagner 1990: 8-9). Problems with this view include the implication that illiteracy necessarily precludes abstract reasoning, and the attribution of a cause and effect relationship between literacy and 'development' (cognitive, social, and economic) where research evidence at best supports only a correlational one.

Street has suggested that an alternative to this 'autonomous' model of literacy is the 'ideological' model, in which literacy is seen as "inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society" and attention is on "the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts" rather than on reading and writing in and of themselves (1992, p. 5). While the autonomous model focuses on "how literacy affects people," the ideological model takes note of "how people affect literacy" (Street 1989, citing Kulick and Stroud 1992).

Some suggest that these two approaches to literacy are irreconcilable, that the autonomous and ideological models of literacy are polarized (cf. Street ~~to appear~~ 1992, p. 7), that literacy as cognitive skill is at odds with literacy as cultural practice. This paper aims to resolve perceived conflicts between cognitive and cultural (or autonomous and ideological) approaches to literacy, by using Hornberger's nine continua of biliteracy (1989) as a framework for examining two specific situations of biliteracy and biliterate development. By doing so it will hopefully be possible to show that the two approaches should not be viewed as opposing beliefs of what literacy *is*, but different ways of looking *at* literacy. To understand any particular instance of (bi)literacy from the participants' point of view, both perspectives need to be understood by the observer. A generous understanding of the notion of literacy as cultural practice allows for the possibility that the cognitive or autonomous aspects of literacy are themselves part of a culturally circumscribed activity.

Hornberger (1989) uses the notion of intersecting and nested continua to demonstrate both the multiple and complex interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy and the importance of the contexts and media through which biliteracy develops. Biliteracy refers to "any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing" (Hornberger 1990:2), and the continua framework suggests that:

1) the development of biliteracy occurs simultaneously along:
   the first language-second language transfer continuum,
   the reception-production continuum, and
   the oral language-written language continuum;
2) through the medium of two (or more) languages and literacies that vary along:
   the similar-dissimilar linguistic structures continuum,
   the convergent-divergent scripts continuum, and
   the simultaneous-successive exposure continuum; and
3) in contexts, including every level of context from the face-to-face interactions involving individuals who are becoming biliterate to the global politico-economic situations and the national policy settings in which they are doing so, which are defined by being situated along:
   the micro-macro continuum,
   the oral-literate continuum, and
   the monolingual-bilingual continuum.

From this framework, Hornberger argues that in order to understand any particular instance of biliteracy, be it a biliterate individual, situation, or society, we need to take account of all dimensions represented by the continua. At the same time, the advantage of the framework is that it allows us to focus on one or selected continua and their dimensions without ignoring the importance of the others.

The two concrete situations of biliteracy and biliterate development examined here are part of a larger long-term comparative ethnographic study on biliteracy in two communities of Philadelphia. Each of us has been involved in the study for two years or more, and intensively for several months in the situation we describe.

The first situation is an adult ESL (English as a Second Language) class for recent Cambodian refugees (all women) taught by a young Cambodian woman who has been in the U.S. through high school and a few years of

community college and vocational school. It is the assumption of this paper that the teacher and students in this class, as members of an urban Cambodian refugee community, share norms of behavior and language use, and also share attitudes toward learning and what it means to know a language. Therefore, their work together reflects a culture of literacy. When their class is read using the continua of biliteracy, it will be shown that a cognitive-skills approach to literacy (emphasizing mechanical encoding and decoding skills) co-exists comfortably with a cultural-practice approach characterized by student-initiated, teacher-supported social learning strategies.

The second specific biliteracy situation is ASPIRA's *Abriendo Caminos* 'Creating Opportunities' program, serving approximately 60-80 Puerto Rican adolescents, ages 16-21, per year, in parallel Spanish-medium and English-medium GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) classes. The program includes not only GED instruction, but also cultural and self-awareness training, and work orientation and experience. An examination of this program using the continua of biliteracy reveals how the program approaches literacy as cognitive skill while at the same time embedding it as cultural practice.

Each biliteracy situation in turn will be briefly described and analyzed using the continua; Hardman will describe the Cambodian adult ESL class and Hornberger the Puerto Rican GED program. A concluding section will return to consideration of the co-existence of the two models.

A Cambodian Adult ESL Class

The ESL class for Cambodians was founded about six years ago by the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition, Inc. (SEAMAAC) in Philadelphia. SEAMAAC is made up of Cambodian, Chinese, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese associations. It was formed in 1979 to address important issues and concerns common to the newly arriving Southeast Asian refugees. The founders of the coalition were especially concerned with issues such as gangs and fighting, drugs, and joblessness (interview, director of SEAMAAC, 7/27/90).

The ESL program is a part of SEAMAAC's program in Adult Basic Education. The director of SEAMAAC sees its primary goal as basic or "survival" English skills: reading the gas bill, reading street signs, etc. And because the students are almost all mothers of school-age children, the director sees it as important for them to be able to communicate with their childrens' teachers (interview). The 1989-90 class described here was held in

the basement of a row-house in West Philadelphia near 47th and Walnut Streets which is owned by the Greater Philadelphia Overseas Chinese Association, a member of SEAMAAC. The Chinese Association provided space and supplies for this class as well as for other ESL classes for Chinese.

The Cambodian ESL class was held four afternoons a week for two hours. The teacher for three of those classes was a Cambodian woman in her twenties, Sarah Lim. She has been in the U.S. since high school, had been through two years of college and is just finishing a vocational program for laboratory technicians. She is nearly fluent in English. The students were almost all women, between 25 and 35 years old, who had come to the U.S. in the last five years.

Most of the students had had very limited education in Cambodia and in the refugee camps. But as there were no entrance requirements for the class, the students were quite diverse in educational experience. Most were literate in Khmer, though a couple were not. Most of them knew the English alphabet and were familiar with reading and writing English words, though a couple were not. Some could carry on a basic conversation in English, but most could not. There were no graduation requirements for the class either. All the students received a formal certificate from SEAMAAC at the end of the class.

On any given day between five and ten students showed up for class somewhere between 2:00 and 2:15. They often brought their children, who played in or outside the classroom. In the middle of class students yelled at their children to be quiet or go home. They left class to attend to crying boys, give someone a key, or just go home. Some students didn't participate in class activities, but just sat quietly and watched what their neighbors were doing. All through class the students chatted comfortably in Khmer and laughed.

Despite the above description, the class was *not* 'informal' or 'learner-centered' in the current pedagogical sense. The teacher was quite formal. In the classroom she seemed to create a great distance between herself and the students. She was very serious, rarely joked. She tried to speak entirely in English. To the outside observer she seemed to make little effort to be interesting, to entertain, to excite, or be friendly. Her role as teacher caused her to behave in extremely formal ways, more formal than is common among American ESL teachers, who generally lean towards breaking down traditional barriers between teachers and students.

What I perceived as formality and informality did not lead to conflict in the classroom; the students and the teacher were not working at cross-purposes. Together they created a context for learning appropriate to their desires and goals as language learners. Somehow, what I (as educational researcher) saw as a conflict between "literacy as cognitive skill" and "literacy as cultural practice" approaches to literacy acquisition, the students and teacher experienced smoothly as 'their way' of learning. One classroom activity which demonstrates some of the tensions I perceived surrounding literacy acquisition will be described using Hornberger's three continua of biliterate development: L_1-L_2 transfer, reception-production, and oral-written.

The L_1-L_2 transfer continuum

Sarah's near monolingual use of English in the classroom suggests a belief that using her students' L_1, Khmer, was of no use to her instruction or the students' development of English. At the time I read this as a "formal" approach to second language instruction, reflective of certain approaches to second language instruction, such as audio-lingualism, which view the L_2 as a set of cognitive skills. Sarah's avoidance of Khmer might indicate a fear of L_1 interference in L_2 acquisition. However, as shown below, the students relied on Khmer to respond to Sarah's questions and help each other understand what was going on. Also, though not reported below, some of the students wrote in Khmer in their notes, mostly to help with vocabulary by writing down the meanings of English words, indicating that the students *did* believe that their L_1 was applicable.

2/22/90; 2:26-2:34

The students have finished copying a dialogue from the board and a list of new words with blanks after them which Sarah wrote on the board before the beginning of class:

Feb. 22 1990

AT THE DENTIST

(continue from Tuesday)

Dr.: Do you have any pain?

Kim: Yes. A little (pointing) in this tooth here in back.

Dr. : Let me see. Open your mouth, please...
wider...Does this hurt?
Kim: A little
Dr.: I can see you have a big cavity there. I would also like to take an x-ray today to see if you have any other cavities.
Kim: Oh. O.K.
Dr.: After we take the x-ray, we'll clean up your teeth. Then we'll make an appointment for you to come back next week.
Kim: O.K. Thank you.

Give the meaning of:

1) patients _____
2) cavity_____
3) appointment _____
4) reminder note _____

Sarah asks the students to write the meanings of the new words.

Sarah: OK, does anybody remember what this means? (She points to 'patient' on the board) We talk about it on Tuesday. If you remember write it down. (She stands silently for two minutes.)

Sarah: Finished? Just give the main...meaning? The meaning of the word, like, patient means something else. Another word for patient? (no response) What is appointment? (a student answers in Khmer) O.K., in English.

A student: You make appointment.

Sarah: Set up time and date. (She writes that on the board.)

Sarah: What is reminder note? (She waits a long time for answers. There are a few answers in Khmer. Sarah writes on the board after patients: People visits doctor or dentist.) What is cavity?

A student: Cavity is when teeth hurt.

Sarah: Right. (She writes on the board: Big holes) O.K., reminder note. Anybody think of it yet? (long pause) Reminder note. (There is some

scattered Khmer. Sarah explains reminder note in English, writes on the board: short letter.) A short letter is called a reminder note. O.K. is everybody finished copying down from the board?

(She walks around and checks a student's work.)

The reception-production continuum

I did not perceive any conflict between the formal and informal along this continuum. Both Sarah and the students were most comfortable with what are usually considered the more 'passive' receptive skills: repeating, copying, listening, and reading aloud. Reading aloud, especially, seemed to be a ritual which brought Sarah and the students together. Interestingly, however, repeating and copying are skills which draw on both ends of the reception-production continuum simultaneously; re-production (repeating, copying) has both receptive and productive aspects. It is likely that Sarah and her students saw these activities as more productive than I did; that is, literacy as cultural practice may shape particular definitions of literacy as cognitive skill. The same is true for reading aloud, which draws not only on both ends of the reception-production continuum, but also on both ends of the written-oral continuum discussed next. Below is a description of their reading routine.

2/22/90; 2:35-2:50

Sarah: O.K. let's read over.

Sarah reads a line of the dialogue written on the board, and the students repeat, each line twice. They even repeat the word "pointing," which is a parenthetical stage direction written in the dialogue. Everyone reads together, loud. When they are finished, they repeat the procedure. Next, the students read as a group, without prompting or instruction from Sarah. It seems very routine. Sarah points to words on the board often as they read. When they are finished, Sarah asks them to repeat. Again, they read "Yes...a little *pointing* in this tooth," where "pointing" is meant to be a stage direction.

Sarah next nominates students to read. She says, "O.K. who wanna be a doctor and who wanna be the patient?" Then she nominates two students who had not raised their hands. The student playing Kim reads "pointing."

They read through with Sarah having to prompt only on "cavities" and "little," then they switch parts and read again.

While another pair of students is reading the dialogue, it is clear that one of them is barely literate in English. She needs prompting every other word or so. She also gets prompts from students next to her. Over and over, Sarah asks her to repeat "little." The typical prompting pattern goes something like this: prompt from a student, attempt at repetition, prompt from Sarah, a second attempt.

The oral language-written language continuum

Both formal and informal modes in this classroom embedded the written within the oral, and vice-versa. Sarah almost never spoke about anything that wasn't written down or soon to be written down, and the students never said anything that wasn't written or about something written. Also, as shown above, they read aloud most of what they wrote. While neither their oral nor written language use in English was what would be called "authentic" in Edelsky's (1986) sense of the word, there is the possibility that there was more meaning to their reading, writing, and speaking activities than an outsider could readily see. The question of "authenticity" is a complex one, and I believe the degree of "authenticity" of certain literacy events (such as reading aloud, repeating, or copying) varies cross-culturally; another instance of literacy as cultural practice shaping definitions of literacy as cognitive skill.

Their ability to read aloud far exceeded their ability to speak, or even to understand what they were reading. Even when reading aloud a dialogue, as shown above, their commitment to reading a stage direction indicated that they saw the dialogue simply as written language, with no relation to what might be a real conversation. Below is another example of how what might look like a listening and speaking activity is really another chance to practice reading aloud in chorus.

2/22/90; 2:50

After students read the dialogue aloud Sarah reviews the vocabulary. The answers to her vocabulary questions were written on the board earlier. Students answer her as a group, reading from the board:

SARAH:	STUDENTS:
O.K. what is cavity?	big hole
How do you get cavity?	hurt your teeth
What is patient?	people visits doctor or dentist
What is appointment?	set up time and date
What is reminder note?	a short letter

In the episodes described above can be seen the combination of cognitive skills and cultural practice approaches to literacy instruction. By "cognitive skills approach" I refer to those teacher-directed activities, emphasizing mechanical encoding and decoding skills (particularly decoding), through copying, reading aloud, and vocabulary drills, that reflect an autonomous model of literacy. By "cultural practice approach" I refer to social learning strategies which are student-directed though implicitly supported by the teacher, include prompting, collaboration, and using the L1 to answer questions and talk with other students, and reflect an ideological model of literacy. Not shown in the examples above is the rather fluid movement of students and their children in and out of activities and in and out of the classroom, implying that these activities and classes are part of the flow of their daily lives.

As stated above, though I perceived these differences in the teacher's and students' approaches to literacy acquisition, there was in fact no conflict in the classroom. Both were living up to the others' expectations of behavior. The continua show that there was actually a good deal of common ground between teacher and students in the area of biliterate development, though at first I only noticed the great difference in their use of L1 and L2. The two approaches described above are complementary parts of a larger whole: the larger culture of teaching, learning, and literacy in the Cambodian community.

A Puerto Rican GED Program

The *Abriendo Caminos* 'Creating Opportunities' program was founded in 1986 by ASPIRA, Inc. of Pennsylvania and was designed "to help what has been regarded as the most difficult of populations -- Hispanic high school dropouts with dead-end futures" (ASPIRA letter of 27 April 1990). The program had its

first home in St. Jakobus Lutheran church at 3rd and Columbia, but since 1988 has been housed, as part of ASPIRA's Centro Antonia Pantoja, on North 6th Street in the heart of Philadelphia's Puerto Rican community in a spacious two story former firehouse donated by the city and refurbished by ASPIRA. The program runs from September to May, enrolling approximately 60-80 Puerto Rican adolescents, ages 16-21, each year. To enroll in the program, the student must be able to read at a 6th grade level or higher. English-dominant students are assigned to the English-medium class and Spanish-dominant students, most of them recently arrived from Puerto Rico, are assigned to the Spanish-medium class. Assignment is generally made on the basis of whether they have done most of their schooling in English or in Spanish; only in cases where they have had fairly equal exposure and appear to be equally at ease in both languages are they asked or tested for their language preference in reading (N. Pérez, Tape 34A:81-110, 6/7/89). During the 1989-90 year, there were four classes: 2 English-medium GED classes, 1 Spanish-medium GED class, and 1 Pre-GED class, each class meeting in either the morning (9-12) or afternoon (1-4) session. In each three-hour session, two hours are devoted to GED work and the third hour to a 'reinforcement' time, taught by the program's counselors and focusing on cultural and self-awareness training.

In addition to the GED and cultural reinforcement components, the program also includes an emphasis on work orientation and experience. The program receives funds through the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which aims to provide avenues to employment for low-income youth. Under this act, the program is accountable for placing a certain percentage of its students in jobs; the students must stay on the job for at least thirty days in order to be counted a successful placement. Toward fulfillment of this goal, the *Abriendo Caminos* staff not only seek to establish on-going partnerships with employers in the Philadelphia area for placement of their students, but also build a substantial work orientation component into their program.

In the paragraphs which follow, I will consider some aspects of the *Abriendo Caminos* program from the perspective of the continua of biliteracy, concentrating for the present purposes on the continua of biliterate contexts. A consideration of the program context in the light of the macro-micro continuum will bring out the ways in which the program approaches literacy as a cognitive skill while simultaneously embedding it as cultural practice; the monolingual-bilingual continuum will reveal the significance of the cultural

awareness training for both the English- and the Spanish-medium groups; and the oral-literate continuum will suggest that 'powerful' English literacy is embedded in Spanish oral language use and that changes in biliteracy configurations may entail significant social disruption.

The macro-micro continuum

The over-riding goal toward which the *Abriendo Caminos* program aims is for all of its students to pass the GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) exam, and they have succeeded at doing so at a 70% rate over the three years of its existence (N. Pérez, 3/20/91 . For those students who enter the program speaking only or mostly Spanish, a concomitant goal is for them to learn English. There is a clear cognitive skill approach to both GED and ESL (English as a Second Language) literacy; both the GED and the ESL curricula are structured around discrete elements of reading and writing skills that must be mastered.

In the GED classes, the students work out of the GED preparation books, English and Spanish versions respectively for the English and Spanish GED classes. The books are organized around the areas tested on the examination: math, science, social studies, writing, and reading comprehension; and include diagnostic tests, sample problems, exercises for developing skills, some reference information (charts, glossaries), and practice tests. The students work at their own individual pace, area by area, testing regularly until they achieve a passing score (75%).

The program director keeps the task focus clearly centered on mastering the GED exam. For example, she makes sure that the students are tested regularly. The Spanish GED teacher commented that both she and her students find the practice tests very discouraging because they repeatedly fail to achieve a passing score, but that the director had recently mandated that they must all be tested again, so they were doing so. In addition, the director put a stop to a play that the Spanish GED teacher had been working on with her students to both build up their skills in English and contribute to their motivation, because the students were too far behind in their GED work (11/30/89).

The focus on mastering the content of the GED books overrides any identifiable inadequacies of the books. Inadequacies identified by students and teachers include gaps in information, confusing instructions, linguistic and sociolinguistic differences and sociopolitical assumptions. In the science area of the Spanish GED book, for example, there are topics tested but not covered;

the teacher intends to use the local free library to try to supplement the inadequate information in the book. In the writing area, one task's instructions to correct the spelling of a list of words are misleading since, in fact, some of the words are already correctly spelled, and furthermore, as a student pointed out, in the case of homonyms you can't tell which one is intended since no context is given. The program director notes that the Spanish GED book (*Exámen de, Equivalencia de la Escuela Superior en Español*, by Ginés Serrán-Pagán, Antonio Acosta, Antonio Márquez, 1987, New York :ARCO) causes some problems for the students because it reflects a variety of Spanish different from the Puerto Rican variety they speak. In addition, for these bilingual students, certain points at which the English and Spanish languages, orthographies, or spelling conventions differ may cause trouble: for example, students complain that the book says the words Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs are not capitalized, whereas they should be since they are proper names. Furthermore, some exercises carry rather strong sociopolitical messages that remain unquestioned due to the nature of the exercise; for example, two sentences for which students were asked to identify and correct errors of article usage were: 1) *Estados Unidos son una nación económicamente fuerte* 'The United States is an economically strong nation'; and 2) *Los Estados Unidos es un gran potencia militar* 'The United States is a great military power.'

These inadequacies raise legitimate doubts and might provide opportunities for further questioning and intellectual inquiry. The overall approach to them, in the class and in the program, however, is not to take them as starting points for investigation, but rather to determine what would be the correct answer in terms of the GED book and proceed from there. In this sense, the approach to GED literacy is one of mastering these discrete pieces of reading and writing, independent of contextual meaning and variation.

In 1989-90, *Abriendo Caminos* implemented a new ESL curriculum, the Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP), a "learning management system designed to deliver individualized, self-paced, competency-based instruction using print, audio-visual and computer-assisted instruction combined with one-on-one teaching" (U.S. BASICS, Alexandria, Virginia). This computerized program includes both academic and functional components; *Abriendo Caminos* is emphasizing the latter (N. Pérez 9/18/89).

The CCP curriculum is organized hierarchically within each component into tiers, subjects, levels, units, and lessons. Each lesson is filed in a separate binder and labeled; in each binder are the core print lesson, an audiocassette, language cards for use on a language card reader, references to print and computer assisted instruction supplements, tutorial activities, lesson assignments, mastery tests, and forms for tracking learner progress. The use of this program involves extensive record-keeping, including a computerized data base on each student, with such information as: personal information, years of school, assistance programs (food stamps, housing assistance, etc.), test scores, number of hours completed in each of various CCP units, and entry and exit dates.

As with the GED program, students work on an individual basis, proceeding in order through the lessons, units, and levels, with regular testing to assess their progress. As with the GED program as well, emphasis is on the students' mastery of the discrete pieces of reading and writing as presented by the materials, independent of contextual meaning or variation. For example, sequencing of the discrete pieces of language from one level to the next seems, in some cases, to leave the lowest level learner with the least amount of significant meaningful content: in the sequence from 2.1.3.2.1 (Functional Foundations) to 2.1.3.3.1 (Functional Frameworks) to 2.1.3.4.1 (Functional Bridges), for example, students proceed from sounds (at the beginning, middle, and end of words) to vocabulary (extended family) to topics (the social security system and making phone calls). Further, scoring procedures on the tests do not allow for sensitivity to students' biliterate or sociolinguistic knowledge: when Lourdes succeeds in identifying the object pictured and the name and position of the vowel sound in it (for five different objects), missing only because she calls 'e' /e/ instead of /i/ and 'i' /i/ instead of /ai/, she nevertheless must be marked wrong for the whole question simply because of confusion between the Spanish and English names for vowels; when Nilsa completes a personal information writing task perfectly except for spelling Pennsylvania as Pensilvania, she too must be marked wrong for the entire task; when José's test asks who should use the designation Ms. in filling out a form and José answers, with considerably more sociolinguistic sensitivity than the 'correct' answer ('unmarried female'), 'single female or married female who doesn't wish to state her marital status,' he too must be marked wrong. Program staff are aware that the tests and the scoring procedures

may not accurately reflect students' knowledge: the director says she feels the scoring is too subjective, while one of the staff members comments that he doesn't know "what it [the test] tells you." Yet, there appears to be a consensus in the program that these skills are the literacy these students need to succeed, and the program must do all it can to help them learn them.

At the same time, however, the *Abriendo Caminos* program embeds this literacy as cultural practice, at every level of context from the macro level of Puerto Ricans as Latin Americans to the micro level of interaction in the classroom. Consider the following:

> 10/19/89 Lilliam tells the Spanish GED class that she saw a program on TV last night that gave her an idea. She tells them that though we are all poor here, we know there are people in Latin America who are much worse off, and she proposes that the class adopt a Latin American child, through a reliable agency like the church. They will send a certain amount of money each month (about $21, or $2 apiece) to provide the child with clothing, food, medicine, books. They will correspond with the child. They will really make a difference in the life of the child. The class is immediately in favor of the idea. Marilyn asks what will happen when they graduate; Lilliam assures her that she and her next year's class will follow through with the child. Nilsa wonders if they could support two; Lilliam suggests they start with one, to see how it goes. As the discussion continues, Nilsa eventually starts to wipe her eyes - she has been moved to gentle tears (these are genuine, and she suffers some good-natured teasing about it). After the class approves the plan, Sonia, as class secretary, agrees to call the agency. The class prepares a poster announcing their decision and posts it around the building.

> 10/12/89 The first thing I notice upon entering the building today is an election poster for Minitza, one of the students in the Spanish GED class. Neida tells me that the students are campaigning this week for their elections next week; each class elects its officers, who in turn elect the representatives to sit on the ASPIRA Club Federation board, who in turn elect a representative to sit on the ASPIRA board. Officers participate in conferences and retreats focusing on developing leadership skills.

When I arrive at the class, the students are preparing posters for the election. They have written a rap song, which they perform for me; Nilsa speaks and others provide the back-up. Although it doesn't appear rhythmic or rhymed as written, when performed it is.

The words of the rap are as follows (exactly as written by the students, with my translation):

Let's Rap

Dejé la escuela	'I left school
a los Quince años	at age fifteen
y vine a Aspira a	and I came to Aspira to
Terminar el cuarto	finish my senior
año.	year.
Coro: Aspira, Aspira	Chorus: Aspira, Aspira
Yo soy Lourdes y te	I am Lourdes, and I
digo a tí que mi	say to you that my
presidencia Te	presidency
conviene a tí.	is to your advantage.
Coro: Aspira, Aspira	Chorus: Aspira, Aspira
Y ahora yo le digo	And now I say to
a jóvenes como yo,	young people like me,
Que día a día le	that day after day
gusta el vacilón, que	enjoy wasting time, that
vayas a la escuela y	you better go to school and
aprovechen la ocación	take advantage of the opportunity
Coro: Aspira, Aspira	Chorus: Aspira, Aspira
y terminando este	and once finished
rapeo y empezando	this rap, and starting
aquí, ahora yo te	from here, now I
pido que votes por	ask you to vote for
mí.	me.

Subsequently, before the election, another verse was added:

Llegué a Aspira	I arrived at Aspira
y empecé a saludar	and started greeting everybody
La maestra me dijo	The teacher told md
ponte a trabajar.	get to work.'

After the election, the program director asked the students to revise the rap, removing the verses about the election, and keeping the rest as an Aspira rap.

10/26/89 This Saturday, the GED classes will have a workshop at Edison High School, in which the GED students will meet in small groups with Puerto Rican professionals to learn what their professions are like.

11/30/89 While Lilliam is out of the classroom for a moment, Marinés, who is working on the science test, asks me which is the largest bird in America: the *águila real* or the *cóndor*. I say I think the *cóndor* is, but she seems quite sure it's the *águila*. Then, Liberto and Lourdes get into the discussion too, Liberto is saying *cóndor*, and Lourdes is not sure. When Lilliam comes back, they ask her; and she authoritatively answers, '*cóndor*,' whereupon Lourdes and Marinés correct their answers, grinning sheepishly as they do so.

Each of these is representative of the way in which the *Abriendo Caminos* program not only affords its students opportunities to use the literacy skills they are acquiring, but also embeds the whole of their GED and ESL literacy learning in a cultural, institutional, and interactional context which recognizes and validates their identity as Puerto Ricans. The first case represents an opportunity for the class to act in solidarity with other Latin Americans; the second shows the *Abriendo Caminos* program's connection to a network of ASPIRA sponsored organizations and programs which support the Puerto Rican community; the third exemplifies how the program draws on the Puerto Rican community to support the students' development; and the fourth reveals how the students accommodate the highly individualized competency-based program to the more collaborative learning approach they seem to prefer.

The monolingual-bilingual continuum

10/5/89 After observing the very lively discussion in today's reinforcement session, I express some surprise to the teacher that most of these young people had never visited Taller Puertorriqueño [a Puerto Rican cultural arts center a few blocks away from the Centro Antonia Pantoja where the GED program is housed] until yesterday. This leads to

a discussion with him about how, growing up here, with the media coverage of their community, the young people's Puerto Rican identity in some ways comes to reflect the external rather than the internal point of view. That is, they take on the identity portrayed in the media (drugs, violence, dropping out), rather than the identity within the community, represented, for example, by Taller.

Thus, when they first are acquainted with Taller, it really is an eye-opening experience, because they begin to realize that many of the things they know and live with are part of their culture, not just odd stray things (e.g. the way their mothers cook and care for them; the music; the fact that Puerto Rican women are 'good to their men'; Puerto Rican good looks; the shared history; and so on); and they begin to feel some pride in being Puerto Rican.

Beyond embedding literacy as cultural practice, the *Abriendo Caminos* program explicitly teaches cultural awareness to its students in the reinforcement session which meets during the third hour (alternating with ESL and work orientation sessions) and is taught by the counselors; there are three counselors on the staff, who meet individually with each student for a half-hour each week in addition to teaching the reinforcement sessions. The counselors take these sessions seriously; counselor José commented that once you give the students an opening and they begin to talk about values, goals, and so on, you must be conscientious about following through with them (9/18/89).

As José's comment indicates, the sessions are directed toward self-awareness, toward helping students explore their own values and goals. For example, I observed sessions on the emotional and practical issues surrounding leaving home (9/28/89), on personal attributes (9/18/89), and on a self-directed search for career possibilities (10/19/89). The core of the sessions, however, is the validation and promotion of the students' Puerto Rican identity. José feels that one reason these students do well in the *Abriendo Caminos* program despite having dropped out of school is that here it is ok to be Puerto Rican, while at school it's as if everything they are is working against them from the first day they show up (9/18/89).

Of course, the *Abriendo Caminos* program as a whole reinforces the students' Puerto Rican identity. The program administrators, teachers, and counselors are all Puerto Rican. The Center is named for Antonia Pantoja,

Puerto Rican educator and founder of ASPIRA. The walls of the center are decorated with posters portraying scenes from Puerto Rico and famous Puerto Ricans such as actress Rita Moreno and former baseball player Roberto Clemente; tables display brochures printed in English, Spanish, or bilingually, advertising, for example, a concert by the *Asociación de Músicos Latinos* (Latino Musicians' Association, AMLA), or workshops and colloquia sponsored by the Arts of Social Change/*Las Artes del Cambio Social*. Nevertheless, it is in the reinforcement sessions that students have the opportunity to explore their Puerto Rican identities, as exemplified in the note quoted above.

What is particularly significant when the program context is considered in terms of the monolingual-bilingual continuum is that Puerto Rican identity reinforcement is seen as crucial for both the English-medium and Spanish-medium GED classes. Both groups take up exactly the same issues and explorations in their reinforcement sessions. The counselors prepare materials in both languages; for example, during the discussions after the students' visits to Taller Puertorriqueño, it became clear that the counselor had prepared both an English and a Spanish version of the questionnaire that they were using as the basis for discussion. On another occasion, José explained to me that he takes care to do a good job whenever he prepares written material in Spanish, because he feels that conveys an important message to the students. However, the crucial content of the sessions, from the participants' point of view, is not the language in which they are conducted, but the exploration of Puerto Rican identity which they pursue. For this case, anyway, language is apparently separable from ethnic identity.[1]

The oral-literate continuum

> "Well, we have to report to our funding source, and they're not bilingual, so all of the documents that we leave behind, other than the curriculum and the course lesson plans for the Spanish GED class, [...] mostly we gear toward English. Now you'll find when the staff sits together that we talk Spanish. The Spanish dominant staff will naturally write in Spanish, but when they submit reports they're

[1] Micheau (1990: 395 et passim) found language to be only one of seven defining characteristics of Puerto Ricanness in the Philadelphia Puerto Rican community, the others being: island ancestry, mixed ethnic and racial heritage, knowledge of/pride in culture, Puerto Rican values, political consciousness, and community responsibility and sacrifice.

> submitted in English, because, again, if we're audited, and we usually are at the end of the program year, they will send people down to review files." (N. Pérez, Tape 34A:69, 6/7/89)

> 10/12/89 As the Spanish GED class discusses the mock interviews to be held tomorrow with all the classes, it comes out that some of the students in this class are very unhappy with the way some of the students in the English GED classes have been behaving - toward them, and in general. Nilsa and Marinés go on at length, in very rapid Spanish, about the rudeness of these other girls, even to the guest speaker yesterday.

A look at the program context from the perspective of the oral-literate continuum, however, reveals that there are some tensions between the languages and their speakers, despite their shared Puerto Rican ethnic identity. For one thing, it becomes clear that there is an unequal relation between the two languages: the predominant pattern in the program is that of powerful English literacy embedded in Spanish oral language use. Spanish is of course used most extensively in the Spanish GED class, yet even there it is often used primarily to embed English literacy: for example, students use Spanish to ask for clarification during their CCP ESL diagnostic test (10/5/89). In the English GED class, the use of Spanish is even more restricted: Magda conducts their entire reinforcement session in English: the handout is in English, everything she writes on the board is in English, and her discussion is in English, with a very few codeswitches into Spanish to issue a directive to the students (9/28/89); again, what oral Spanish use there is, embeds English literacy.

Secondly, there are differences between the Spanish- and English-medium students, differences that at times flare up in intergroup tensions. While the English-medium students tend to be those born or at least mostly raised on the mainland, the Spanish-medium students tend to be island-born and raised. This means not only that the schooling of the two groups has been in different languages, but also that they likely reflect slightly different sets of values and behaviors associated with the mainland and island settings, respectively. The program director comments, for example, that the program has a hard time convincing the English GED students to accept help, while the Spanish GED students are very open to help and tutoring. The excerpt quoted

above exemplifies that the Spanish GED group gets upset with the English GED group for what appears to them as lack of politeness. These are little tensions which reflect a larger underlying tension accompanying the changing biliteracy configuration as both groups acquire English literacy. It is to the program's credit that it acknowledges and addresses these tensions, making it possible for both groups to successfully graduate at year's end.

Conclusion

It is significant for the success of the GED program that it does manage to embed literacy as a cultural practice even while it approaches it as a cognitive skill. Ferdman notes that,

> " at the individual level,... the process of becoming and being literate involves becoming and being identified with a particular culture... When there is a mismatch between the definition and significance of literacy as they are represented in a person's cultural identity and in the learning situation, the individual is faced with making a choice that has implications for his or her acquisition of reading and writing skills'" (1990:189,195).

Recognizing this, the program ensures its students' success by making it possible for them to acquire the discrete reading and writing skills they need for attaining high school graduation credentials and employment in U.S. society, while at the same time representing and reinforcing a cultural identity which they can accept. Indeed, we would suggest that it is the very fact that the program represents and reinforces literacy as cultural practice that enables the students to acquire literacy as cognitive skill.

In the Cambodian adult ESL class, many of the students (excluding the few who are not literate in Khmer) are engaged in learning a second literacy. They bring to this task both Khmer language skills and previous literacy acquisition experience. They are building a bridge to a new language and culture using the materials and skills from a familiar one. As the students are becoming adept at handling two very different cultures, it should not be surprising that they can handle, even depend on, a language learning environment (a culture of literacy) built upon a fusion of two different approaches to language learning and literacy acquisition: cognitive skills and cultural practice.

While the autonomous model of literacy arises from a peculiarly monocultural notion of a single, standardized, schooled literacy (cf. Cook-

Gumperz 1986), the ideological model reflects a pluralistic view. It is hardly surprising, then, that it is in these situations of biliteracy, whose participants are daily involved in negotiating the co-existence of languages and cultures, that we find evidence of the co-existence of the two models, specifically that the autonomous model is circumscribed by the ideological model.

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